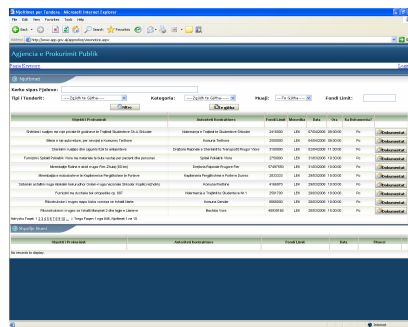




SUCCESS STORY

Downloading Downs Corruptive Practices in Albania's Public Procurement

IT solutions in public procurement combat corruption and increase transparency



With all public tender notices posted online at the website of the Albanian Public Procurement Agency, www.app.gov.al, all interested businesses can have easy access to tender documents.

The two-year \$13.85 million Millennium Challenge Albania Threshold Agreement between the Government of Albania (GoA) and Millennium Challenge Corporation (www.mcc.gov), administered by USAID, assists the GoA to reform and modernize tax administration, public procurement and business registration through IT solutions and legislative enhancements.

U.S. Agency for International Development
www.usaid.gov

There's nothing earth shattering in the dictum that "Information is Power". Yet it is astonishing to witness how insidious its manifestations might be, and at the same time wondrous how technology can even the score. Take this before-and-after story in public procurement in Albania.

Prefacing the before-story, let's say that you as an average interested Albanian business had learned of an upcoming public tender and wanted to obtain the tender documents, then available only in paper format. Picture this: You got to the offices of the contracting authority to find that the responsible procurement officer was either having a coffee somewhere or he (very rarely did it happen for such an official to be a 'she') was busy in a non apparent kind of way. The result was the same you had to wait.

Now, it is a proven fact that time spent waiting when you are not sure what to expect is perceived as double what it is, but let me assure you that in this case the overall wait time would not be short to begin with. So what about the uncertainty? It is simple. More often than not, after you had inquired a couple of times whether anyone else might help you or whether your turn had come, receiving in return only blank expressions at best, you would be told to come back the next day. Unless (here it comes in what would be the worst case scenario), you were willing to speed things up. The 'B' word. 'B' as in 'bribe', or 'B' as in 'better-pay-up-or-else-walk-away'. The tender notice was something you were entitled to have? In principle yes, but practically denied, because someone could.

Here it is where technology comes to the aid.

As of January 1st, 2007, a new law on public procurement entered into force in Albania, mandating that all public tender notices and relevant documents should be posted online at the website of the Public Procurement Agency (www.app.gov.al). Thus, all interested businesses can now find information on tenders at the same time, as soon as it is posted and they can download tender documents free of charge at any time. There is 'no waiting', no need to 'coax' it out of somebody. All are 'first in the e-line' for information. As simple as that.

And the good news does not end there. Online tender notices and downloadable tender documents is just a first step. With the assistance of the Millennium Challenge Albania project, Albania has furthermore successfully piloted the full-service e-procurement system, which will allow for tender proposals to be submitted and evaluated online. As of December 4th, 2007, the e-procurement system has been formally approved for use by the Government of Albania. The target for 2008 is to e-procure 10% of the overall public procurement budget in the country.

So, what happened to the procurement officer selling public tender information, you wonder? He's gone the way of the dinosaurs, compliments of 'D'. 'D' for 'downloading'.

Millennium Challenge Albania Threshold Agreement

"Pjetër Budi" Street
Classic Construction Building
1st Floor, No. 10, Tirana 1000, Albania

Tel: +355-4-380-400
Fax: +355-4-380-424
Web: www.mcata.org.al